

April 3, 1979

LB 143

in favor of the bill at the public hearing after the amendments were adopted. The rest of them took a no position. Nobody opposed the bill. Now at the eleventh and a half hour Senator Johnson comes in with three pages of amendments and says this is something that we would have to have and we ask you to adopt it. I asked Senator Johnson to meet with the utility companies to discuss this. I understand that he did meet with them, no decision was reached. What I am saying very simply is that this is a fragile bill, Senator Johnson, and these amendments might certainly kill the bill. I don't think that is your intent at all because philosophically we are on the same side but I think that I can tell you very categorically that the adoption of these amendments will do that. Now if that is your aim, then so be it. My suggestion is this. I think perhaps an agreement or a compromise on some of the provisions might be able to be worked out but you cannot just toss in three pages of amendments without discussion and ask this body to adopt them when we spent three years dealing with the subject matter. My suggestion would be to reject the Johnson amendments. I would hope that Senator Johnson would spend just a fraction of the time that I have spent in working on this issue and meet with some of those individuals who are concerned about this area and see if perhaps some of the amendments which he has offered can be adopted. It is possible that I might be able to accept some of them but I guess the bottom line is really this. LB 143 addresses a very serious problem dealing with due process. It does not take care of concerns for people who cannot pay bills, merely those who are going to be shut off and who have been wronged because they have not been able to bring their case before the utilities, and this was evidenced in Craft versus Memphis. To interject extensive new language where Senator Johnson is indicating, it changes the bill enough without the time to sit down and discuss the amendments thoroughly really jeopardizes any type of legislation in this area that we have tried to get through, and as the introducer, Senator Johnson, while I understand that any bill that is brought before this body is subject to debate and the amending process by the full body, I strongly resent your efforts in this area without consultation because essentially we have not consulted on this. I don't think you really understand the ramifications of what you are trying to do. I don't think you really understand the ramifications about how fragile this piece of legislation is. I would urge the body for those who support the philosophy of LB 143 to reject the Johnson amendments. I think that we can take a look at them after this time if Senator Johnson will spend a little bit of time to sit down with the introducer of the bill and with